AN INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOLOGY OF TERRORIST AND SUICIDE TERRORIST

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PREFACE
    Attempting to explain the causes of terrorism, and particularly suicide terrorism, is of great interest where such behaviour appears quite common. The reasons for such behaviour are complex and multi-factorial. In other words, there is no simple catch-all explanation, though such an explanation is appealing.
    It is also appealing to see terrorists as different from the rest of society. In some ways, they are different to the majority of people, but in others, they are just ordinary people doing extreme things.
    The aim of this booklet is to make use of psychological knowledge generally to try and draw a picture of how ordinary people can do such extreme things.

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INTRODUCTION

DEFINING TERRORISM

Terrorism is not easy to define. It is also not easy to distinguish it from political violence against a repressive regime or from "revolutionary violence" (both seen as legitimate forms of political violence) (Lodge 1981).

Simply, terrorism is "violence for effect" and "Fear is the intended effect, not the by-product" (Jenkins 1975 p1).

Schmid (1983) performed a content analysis on 109 definitions of terrorism, and found 22 common elements. Table 1 shows the most common elements in the definitions.

MOST COMMON ELEMENTS	PERCENTAGE OF DEFINTIONS
1. violence/force	83.5
2. political intent	65
3. fear/terror	51
4. psychological effects	47
5. reaction	41.5

Table 1 - Five most common elements in definitions of terrorism.

Aron (1966) noted that an "action of violence is labelled as 'terrorist' when its psychological effects are out of proportion to its purely physical result" (p170). While Freedman (1986) emphasised the role of fear that terrorism engenders in all civilians, through being "extreme and ruthlessly destructive" (Wilkinson 1974).

The "systematic use of coercive intimidation" can be seen generally as "a specific method of struggle rather than a synonym for political violence or insurgency" (Wilkinson 1986). This means that it can be used by a variety of actors like "a kind of weapon-system".

Wilkinson (1986) notes five groups of participants in the process: (i) the perpetrators of violence; (ii) the immediate victims; (iii) the wider target group of society who the terrorists seek to intimidate; (iv) the "neutral" bystanders in society experiencing the terrorism; and (v) international opinion.

The perpetrators of violence can be sub-divided into (Wilkinson 1986):

a) Nationalist terrorists seeking political self-

determination;

b) Ideological terrorists aiming to change the whole political, social and economic system;

c) Religious fanatics wanting to overthrow a prevailing religious order;

d) Single-issue fanatics who aim to change one area of policy only;

e) State-sponsored international terrorists used by countries as part of their domestic or foreign policy.

Other distinctions include "revolutionary" terrorism (aimed at political revolution); "sub-revolutionary" terrorism (for political motives other than revolution); "repressive" terrorism (to restrain certain groups or behaviour deemed undesirable) (Wilkinson 1974); or "psychotic" terrorism (with uncertain or irrational motivation, usually personal) (Bowyer Bell 1978).

Schechterman (1987) adds forms of "irrational" terrorism based on terrorists' own code of behaviour and may be the only means of persuasion used. The "rational" terrorist has assessed that violence is the last resort.

Merari (1978) distinguishes between Xenofighters, who divert their activities against "foreigners", and Homofighters, who focus their terrorism on their own people. What is important here is that the first grouping has no need of the support of the target population, and thus less concern about the scale of injuries inflicted.

SUICIDE TERRORISM

Suicide terrorism is more about the psychological effect than the actual damage and injury, though these should not be underestimated. It says quite clearly that "we are willing to die for our cause".
This behaviour, the scale of recent acts of terrorism, and the apparent willingness to use chemical or biological weapons, has led to the phrase "superterrorism" (Freedman 2002).

Suicide attacks were used by Japan in World War II with "kamikazi" pilots. More recently, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eclam (LTTE) ("Black Tigers") used this method in Sri Lanka. The suicide bombing of the US embassy in Beirut in 1983 is seen as the beginning of it's use in the Middle East ("Human Weapons" 2002).
Of 270 suicide attacks between 1980 and 2000, 168

were carried out by LTTE, 52 by Hizbollah, 22 Hamas, and 15 PKK (Gearson 2002).

Gearson (2002) distinguishes three main types of suicide terrorists:

i) Groups who only use it on specific occasions, but generally are not in favour of it;

ii) Groups that adopt it as a temporary tactic, and establish legitimacy in their group for it;

iii) Groups that use suicide terrorism as a permanent strategy.

In situations of extreme behaviour like suicide terrorism, there is the immediate search for a simple answer. One that makes the perpetrators different to the norms of the rest of society is very appealing.

For example, after recent suicide bombings in Israel, some parts of the media there have suggested that the bombers had taken large quantities of drugs and alcohol beforehand. But analysis of the remains of these individuals have not found this to be the case (Silke 2003).

Other everyday explanations of such behaviour include mental illness and psychopathy.

To explain the behaviour as a sign of evil or by "brainwashed pawns" is evidence of the fundamental attribution error (Ross 1977). This is the tendency to explain other people's behaviour in a different way to how we would explain our own behaviour in the same situation. Usually it involves ignoring situational factors for behaviour. Such attributional processes make "the behaviour of others appear more predictable, and apparently enhance our sense of control over the environment" (Brewer 2003a p8).

It is disturbing to think that such behaviour could be performed by "ordinary" or "normal" people given the right (or wrong) circumstances.

Pyszczynski et al (2003) writing about the events of September 2001 in the USA point out that:

> at the heart of things, all human beings are fundamentally the same, with the same biological and psychological needs. We are all members of the same species; our behaviour and motivation can, therefore, be best understood through the use of the same general biological and psychological principles (pxi).

EXPLAINING TERRORISM

Research has shown that extreme behaviour is not the territory of individuals who are different, but is based upon a combination of factors, including social ones.

Eyad Sarej has interviewed failed Palestinian suicide bombers (reported in "Human Weapons" 2002). A combination of factors emerge from these interviews:

a) Talk of the injustice of the political situation in Israel/Palestine;

b) The "pull" of Paradise as immediate reward for the martyr, which includes being attended by "72 black-eyed virgins";

c) Childhood trauma and witnessing humiliation; eg: seeing beating of father by Israeli troops;

d) Taking a "paranoid position" that divides the world into "them" (enemy) and "us"; ie: "they" are very different to "us". There is no distinction within the "enemy" between those who fight and those who do not.

Janke (1992) attempts to show the "making" of a terrorist as a series of stages: dissatisfaction and frustration with society; bonding with other like-minded individuals; revulsion, alienation and isolation from society.

Brewer (2003b) has proposed a synthesis model to explain aggression, but it can be applied to terrorism. The model contains two parts - the general level of aggression, which is due to a combination of individual, group, and social factors, and then the specific act of aggression, triggered by environmental factors, and involving disinhibition. The model is presented in figure 1. Figure 2 shows how this model can be applied to explain violence in Northern Ireland by the Loyalist and Nationalist terrorist groups.
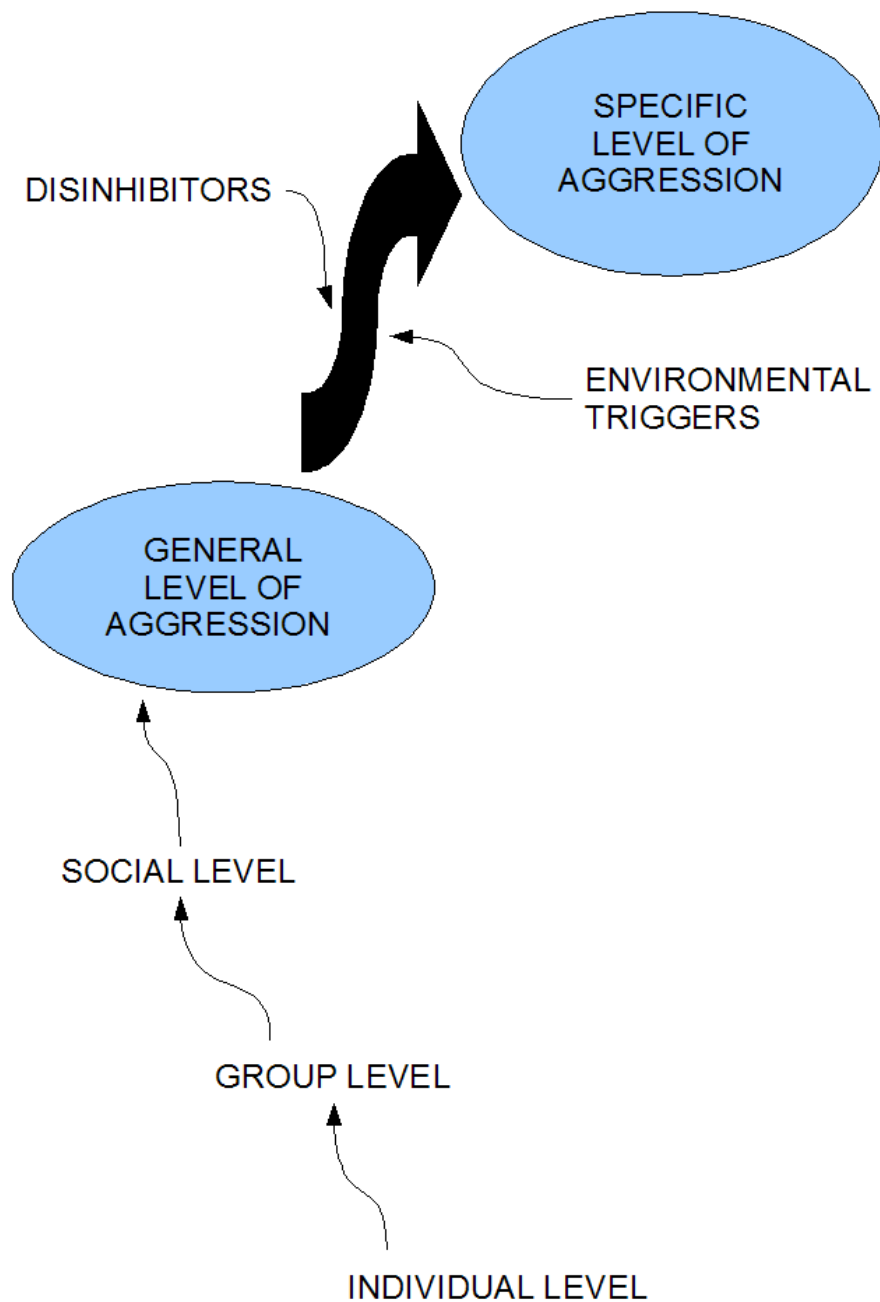
Figure 1 - A synthesis model to explain aggression and terrorism.

The model contains five groups of factors:

1. Individual factors

This group of factors relate to the individual, and include beliefs and attributions, and their personality.

Attribution is the process by which the individual makes sense of ambiguous situations, including their perception of threats. Dodge (1986) talks of the "hostile attribution bias" - the tendency to perceive the actions of others as threatening and thus must be countered with action. For example, accidentally bumping into a person in a crowded situation is perceived as deliberate, and therefore a challenge.

2. Group factors

These are factors related to the groups that an individual is part of, primarily the family and the peer group. Here it includes the power of group pressure (social influence), social identity, and the role of "recruiting institutions" to terrorism.

3. Social factors

This group of factors are those causes of general aggression that exist within society as a whole; eg: social support and status of terrorists, ideology and discourses about violence.

Generally we are talking about the social construction of behaviour. Each society will have a "normal" or "acceptable" level of aggression. Aggressive behaviour is constructed within the "norms" of society; ie: there are situations where it is acceptable to use it.

For example, a survey, of 2000 14-21 year olds, by the Zero Tolerance Charitable Trust in Edinburgh in 1999, found situations where both male and female respondents felt it was acceptable for a man to hit a woman. One in four men, and one in eight women, thought hitting a woman could be justified if she had "slept with someone else" (quoted in Brewer 2000).

Wetherell and Potter (1989) looked at the protests and fighting during the 1981 South African rugby team's visit to New Zealand, and did discourse analysis on the perceptions of the aggressive response of the police to the protesters. The behaviour of the police was justified in a number of interviews, and thus not labelled as aggressive. For example, when:

a) the police were antagonised by protesters;

b) the police action was seen as a response to earlier violence;

c) the police were seen as only doing their job.

4. Disinhibitors

The general level of aggression can be converted into specific actions by the presence of factor(s) that reduce the likelihood of not being aggressive. These are known as disinhibitors, and include deindividuation, dehumanisation of the "enemy", and the "normality" of violence.

Deindividuation is the process by which individuals feel anonymous, have a loss of self identity, and thus a loss of restraint on their behaviour.

Deindividuation has been found with darkness (Gergen et al 1973), disguises or uniforms (Zimbardo 1969), and in crowds (Mullen 1986).

However, deindividuation does not inevitably lead to aggression. In the Gergen et al (1973) experiment, participants were left in groups of strangers in a pitch black room. Participants here tended to show a decline in inhibitions and touched each other more than in a normally lit room rather than becoming aggressive.

5. Environmental triggers

In certain situations, the individual's general level of aggression will be triggered into specific aggression. This will be due to certain things in the environment at the time. The most common trigger for terrorism is as retaliation or perceived retaliation.

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GENERAL LEVEL          →          SPECIFIC ACT
OF AGGRESSION                     OF AGGRESSION

                                       ↑

        ↑                        DISINHIBITORS
                                 eg: "normality" of violence;
                                 dehumanising of "enemy"
SOCIAL FACTORS

eg history of conflict,                ↑
including past perceived         ENVIRONMENTAL TRIGGERS
or real injustices;              eg bombing/killing by "enemy"
social construction of
violence as "required
response";
fear of "enemy"


        ↑
GROUP FACTORS
eg community identity
as Protestant/Loyalist
or Catholic/Nationalist


       ↑
INDIVIDUAL FACTORS
eg personal beliefs
about "enemy";
attributions about
social world ("just
world hypothesis")
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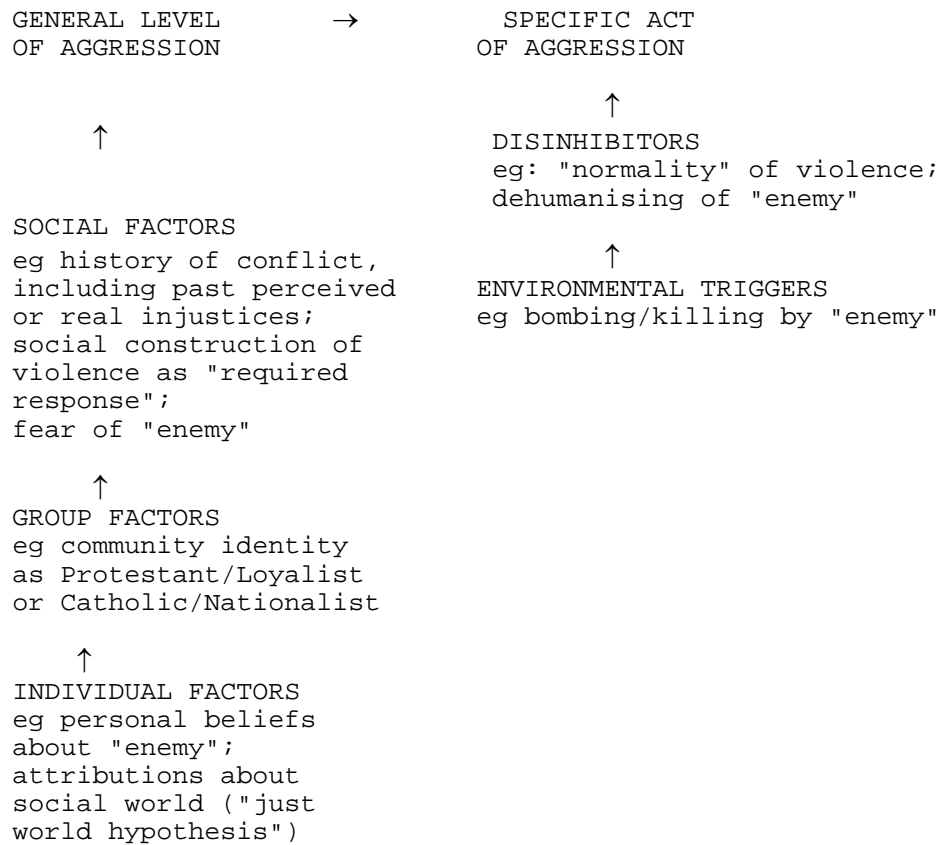
Figure 2 - Example of the synthesis model of aggression applied to terrorist violence in Northern Ireland.

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS IN TERRORISM

MENTAL ILLNESS

A popular image of the terrorist focuses upon the individual, and the idea that they are "crazed", or psychopathic. Psychopathy is technical known as Anti-Social Personality Disorder. The most important characteristics being the absence of guilt or remorse, and the lack of concern for others.

Psychopathy

Psychopath is a commonly used term, but the technical meaning varies in law and psychiatry. Even among professionals, psychopath is a disputed concept: "'psychopathy' remains a stereotype or an ideal-type personality rather than an accurate description of any real individual" (Cavadino 1998).

There are three different uses of the term psychopath according to Blackburn (1993):

i) A general term meaning "psychologically damaged"; linked to Personality Disorders generally in the classification of mental disorders.

ii) Anti-Social Personality Disorder in the classification of mental disorders.

iii) Specific personality traits - as measured by Psychopathy CHecklist (PCL).

Estimates vary as the prevalence of psychopathy. Studies from the USA suggest about 3% of the population. But the figures vary between 1% for women and 6% of the population for men (Robins et al 1984).

Not all psychopaths are involved in criminal activities. In fact, the vast majority are found in ordinary areas of life. In the business world, the characteristics of a psychopath can produce a "ruthless businessman".

Anti-social Personality Disorder is defined as "a pervasive pattern of disregard for, and violation of, the rights of others that begins in childhood or early adolescence and continues into adulthood" (APA 1994 p645).
In the past, Anti-Social Personality Disorder was distinguished by the fact that the individual is:

incapable of significant loyalty to individuals, groups, or social values. They are grossly selfish, callous, irresponsible, impulsive, and unable to feel guilt or to learn from experience and punishment. Frustration tolerance is low. They tend to blame others or offer plausible rationalizations for their behaviour (APA 1968 p43).

Diagnosis of Anti-Social Personality Disorder requires evidence of three of more behaviours from a list of seven (table 2). The more behaviours evident the more severe the condition.

ANTI-SOCIAL PERSONALITY DISORDER

Three or more from following behaviours:
1. Illegal non-conformity
2. Deceitfulness
3. Impulsivity
4. Irritability and aggression
5. Reckless disregard for safety of self and others
6. Irresponsible behaviour
7. Lack of remorse

Diagnosis also requires evidence of the following:

A. Enduring pattern of these behaviours that deviates markedly from cultural expectations
B. Enduring pattern is inflexible and pervasive across situations
C. Stable and long term patterns of behaviour
D. Not due to substance abuse or general medical condition
E. The individual is distressed by their behaviour
F. Behaviour not caused by another mental disorder

Table 2 - DSM IV (APA 1994) criteria for Anti-Social Personality Disorder.

Focusing upon specific characteristics of psychopathy. They include superficial charm, a grandiose sense of self-worth, a low frustration of tolerance, pathological lying and deception, a lack of sincerity, remorse or empathy, and impulsivity (Hare 1980).

The diagnosis of "criminal psychopathy" makes use of a questionnaire known as the Psychopathy Checklist (PCL-R). Originally produced in 1980, it was revised by Robert Hare in 1991. There are 20 items (characteristics), and during an unstructured interview, the individual is scored by the interviewer as 0, 1 or 2 on each item. The cut-off point is a score of thirty or above. Table 3 lists the twenty items.

Taylor (1988) quotes the example of Nezar Hindawi who attempted to use his unsuspecting pregnant lover as a suicide bomber on an El Al airliner in April 1986. The bomb was discovered at the airport before take-off. The

1. Glibness/superficial charm
2. Grandiose sense of self worth
3. Need for stimulation/proneness to boredom
4. Pathological lying
5. Cunning/manipulative
6. Lack of remorse/guilt
7. Shallow affect
8. Callous lack of empathy
9. Parasitic lifestyle
10. Promiscuous sexual behaviour
11. Poor behaviour controls
12. Early behaviour problems
13. Lack of realistic, long term goals
14. Impulsivity
15. Irresponsibility
16. Failure to accept responsibility for own actions
17. Many short term marital relationships
18. Juvenile delinquency
19. Revocation of conditional release
20. Criminal versatility

Table 3 - Items of Psychopathy Checklist (PCL-R).

girlfriend appears to have been used without knowing it. Such apparently callous behaviour is seen as a characteristic of psychopathy, but this is a relatively rare example. The vast majority of terrorists are willing participants.

Attempting to explain all terrorism through psychopathy is unlikely: "Terrorism, like any other serious undertaking, requires dedication, perseverance and a certain selflessness. These are the very qualities that are lacking in the psychopath" (Cooper 1978).
But terrorist groups do "generate opportunities for those who are prone to terrorist behaviour as a result of psychopathic tendencies" (Janke 1992 p185).

Other Mental Illness Than Psychopathy

For some researchers, the appeal of the individual explanation of mental illness, particularly in the case of suicide attacks, is obvious. But there is limited evidence for this explanation to account for all acts of terrorism.
Rasch (1979) found no evidence of paranoia, psychosis, or psychopathy among eleven individuals suspected of involvement with the Baader-Meinhof group in Germany.
Similarly, Ferracuti and Bruno (1983) could not find "a general psychiatric explanation of terrorism" among Italian terrorists studied. While Lyons and Harbinson (1986), in their study of 106 individuals charged with murder in Northern Ireland between 1974-84, noted that the political murderers were more psychologically stable

than the non-political ones.

"Difficult though it is to accept, the vast majority of all terrorist violence, even suicide attacks, remain totally purposeful and, although rarely successful, are undertaken with ends in mind" (Gearson 2002 p23).

In fact, "recruiters" to terrorist organisations would avoid such individuals because they could not be trusted to carry out the plans as arranged.

Post (quoted in Ormsby 2003) studied 35 Palestinian militants, and found that "level-headed and mentally stable" were key characteristics when recruiting terrorists. Planning and obedience to authority are needed.

SOCIALLY MARGINALISED INDIVIDUALS

One everyday explanation of terrorism is that the perpetrators are lone individuals on the margins of society, who have no hope to live for. Apart from a few exceptions, this appears not to be so.

This is no evidence that suicide bombers are friendless, jobless, or possess suicidal symptoms; nor a sense of hopelessness and nothing to lose (Scott Atran quoted in Ormsby 2003).

Interviews with members of groups in Egypt affiliated to al-Qaeda found that most came from "stable middle-class homes and were university educated" (Simon and Benjamin 2001). Russell and Miller (1977) noted that two-thirds of members of 18 terrorist groups studied between 1966-76 had some form of university training.

However, the Pakistani suicide bombers in Kashmir were more likely to be from poorer families (Stern 2000).

PERSONALITY

Studies of terrorist groups have attempted to highlight the common characteristics. For example, the political terrorists of the 1970s were statistical likely to be single, male, aged 22-24, well educated, and from middle-class families (Russell and Miller 1977).

Unfortunately, this is of limited help because terrorist groups are not homogeneous in membership characteristics. It is difficult to identify predictors of potential terrorists from individual characteristics (Taylor 1988). But it does help to paint the picture of the terrorist as "ordinary people" in their society or culture.

Personality Theory of Hans Eysenck

Hans Eysenck's theory of personality is based upon subtle differences in the central and autonomic nervous systems of individuals. These physical differences account for whether an individual will conform to social rules or not. And it is this that determines who commits criminal or terrorist behaviour. Thus the individual with a nervous system that is less sensitive and excitable will engage in crime.

For Eysenck's theory, personality is based on the dimensions of extravert-introvert, and emotional-stable (originally called neurotic-stable) (Eysenck 1967). Everybody is placed along these two dimensions, and they combine to give four possible types: stable introverts; stable extraverts; emotional extraverts; or emotional introverts.

Eysenck felt that extraverts generally needed more excitement and stimulation; thus they were more likely to be impulsive and thrill-seeking, which could lead to criminal behaviour.
Also Eysenck believed that extraverts do not learn from past experiences easily. Extraverts by their biology are thrill-seeking, and then do not learn to fear punishment or learn from the past. So this is the way the extravert is more likely to be a criminal.

Eysenck later added a third dimension called psychoticism. Putting all the dimensions together, Eysenck predicted that the criminal will be extravert, emotional, and a high scorer on psychoticism (Eysenck 1977).

There is inconsistent support for the extravert as criminal. But there is support from a limited amount of research for high psychoticism scorers and frequent offending (Brewer 2000). But once more this theory cannot explain all terrorist behaviour.

Gray (1981) revised Eysenck's theory to focus on anxiety and social withdrawal. Gray's theory has four dimensions to the personality - extravert/introvert and neurotic (anxious)/stable from Eysenck, and adds impulsive/controlled, and sociable/socially withdrawn. So, for example, the criminal will be high on anxiety and social withdrawal, while the psychopath is high on impulsivity and extraversion, according to Gray.

Authoritarian Personality Type

Is there a personality type that is more prone to terrorism? It may not be possible to give a simple answer to this question, but research has looked at a "prejudiced personality type".

Adorno et al (1950), while testing the personality of a large number of people in California, who were white, non-Jewish, native-born, middle-class Americans (ie WASP - white Anglo-Saxon Protestant), found them to be "anti-everything-except other WASPs".

The key characteristics were anti-semetism. ethnocentrism (ie: focused on own ethnic group), politically conservative, and authoritarian (eg: belief in absolute submission to authority). These characteristics together became known as the "authoritarian personality".

Such individuals had experienced rigid and harsh childhood punishment, which made them intolerant of anything that was different.

Psychodynamic Explanations of Personality

Psychodynamics is based upon the work of Sigmund Freud. His explanation of adult behaviour concentrates upon childhood experiences, particularly traumatic, which are pushed into the unconscious mind. Though they cannot be remembered, these experiences will still influence behaviour.

In Freud's theory all children are born with the id dominant. This is the part of the personality that is concerned with instinctive desires and pleasures. In time the ego develops, and comes to dominate the personality. The ego is the socialised part of the personality (ie: it is aware of socially acceptable behaviour). For some individuals, this process does not occur and the process of "latent delinquency" takes over. Thus the emphasis is placed upon the early emotional relationships of the child, usually with the mother.

However, Freud did not specifically write about criminal behaviour. Alexander and Healy (1935) adapted his idea's to explain the criminal as unable to progress from the pleasure principle (instant gratification of the id dominated person) to the reality principle (with the ego dominant). Furthermore, the criminal may be subliminating (ie: acting out) in crime their lack of early emotional ties. Again the emphasis is upon the early relationships of the child.

Fields (1979) suggests that early exposure to

terrorism in Northern Ireland can lead to the development of adult terrorist behaviour. But simply childhood experiences leading to adult behaviour is not psychodynamics. There needs to be a mechanism by which the repressed behaviour manifests itself in adulthood.

Furthermore, Heskin (1980) sees social deprivation and more general prolonged exposure to violence in Northern Ireland as the causes of social unrest.

By far the strongest supporter of the link between early relationships and crime was John Bowlby. He argued that juvenile delinquency was an inevitable consequence of the long term separation of the child from the mother. In his best known study (Bowlby 1946) of 44 juvenile thieves and 44 "disturbed adolescents" (ie: non-delinquents), he found that 39% of the former group had experienced complete separation from their mothers for six months or more in the first five years of their lives (compared to 5% of the non-delinquent group).

Generally there are many criticisms with this work. But specifically, Kellen's (1979) study of four terrorists in the 1970s (two German, one Croatian, and one Japanese) found no particular pattern of childhood experiences.

Typical psychodynamic mechanisms to explain terrorism motivation generally include repressed hate from parental abuse (Kent and Nicholls 1977) or the "blockage of functional empathy" (Clark 1980).

There are many and varied psychodynamic-based explanations, but they suffer from a lack of specificity, and the problem of "why it is that so few people exposed to the presumed generating conditions of terrorism actually become terrorists" (Taylor 1988 p146).

INDIVIDUAL BELIEFS AND ATTRIBUTIONS

Perceived injustice by the "enemy", and the belief that they must suffer in return is a strong motivation for terrorism. Silke (2003) argues that anger and a sense of outrage are key, and many Palestinian suicide bombers have had relatives or friends killed or injured by Israeli armed forces. Thus the role of revenge combined with feelings of powerlessness, particularly in the face of overwhelming odds.

One immediate explanation after September 2001 was the USA had it coming:

Some asserted that American foreign policy, driven by greed and the lust for ever-expanding influence and power, wrecked

havoc throughout the Middle East and led to the justifiable rage that motivated the suicide bombers (Pyszczynski et al 2003 p144).

Whether this is true or not about US foreign policy, it is the belief about the USA that matters in how individuals make sense of the world.

Just World Hypothesis

Psychologists talk about the "just world hypothesis" (Lerner 1980). This is the belief that the environment "is a just and orderly place where people usually get what they deserve" (Lerner and Miller 1978).

The classic experiment to show the "just world hypothesis" is by Jones and Aronson (1973). They wrote a number of scenarios about a woman being attacked by a stranger. The participants reading the stories were more likely to blame the victim for their misfortune in certain circumstances. For example, the woman was described as a virgin in one version of the story, or as wearing provocative clothes in another version. In the latter case, the victim was blamed more for her attack.

Paradox of Morality

How the world is viewed allows the terrorist to claim moral superiority (or purity) while belittling the victim as deserving it. Taylor (1988) calls this the "paradox of morality". Other forms of denial are also used. This is known as "guilt transfer" (Tugwell 1982).

Sykes and Matza (1957) have proposed five techniques of "neutralisation" or denial which allow individuals to deny their actions are wrong or harmful:

i) Denial of responsibility (eg: blaming their upbringing);

ii) Denial of injury to victim;

iii) Denial of victim (ie: victim deserves it);

iv) Condemnation of condemners (ie: critical of criminal justice system);

v) Appeal to higher loyalties (eg: religious beliefs).

Cognitive Dissonance

Another psychological process that aids the "paradox of morality" is known as the theory of cognitive dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance is an explanation put forward by Festinger (1957) to account for attitude changes. When two "cognitions" are inconsistent, the individual is motivated to resolve this.

A well-known example is of a smoker who believes that "smoking causes cancer". This is a situation of inconsistency, which Festinger argued causes "psychological discomfort". The "sensible" option would be to stop smoking, but that is fixed, so the individual must change their attitudes about "smoking causes cancer".
This can be done in a number of ways:

- by belittling the evidence about smoking and cancer;
- convincing others to smoke;
- building an image around no fear of cancer;
- smoking low-tar cigarettes;
- associating with other smokers.

Another example of cognitive dissonance is the situation where individuals do something in order to gain a reward, but the reward is then not given after the individual has done that task. This causes inconsistency: the individual worked for the reward, but there was no reward.
The fact that the individual worked for the reward cannot be changed, so the motivation is what can be changed. The individual comes to believe that they worked for their own satisfaction, and so subsequently are more enthusiastic about the task now there is no reward. What this shows is that individuals are quite illogical in their behaviour (Brewer 2003d).

Festinger et al (1956) first noted this phenomena of cognitive dissonance while studying a small group in USA who believed that the world would end, and they (the believers) would be saved and taken to the planet "Clarion".
The believers met at the appointed time (as set by "prophecies" given to the leader, Marion Keech), but no spaceships came to collect them. After this event, the individuals were told (by another "prophecy") that their "good works" had stopped the destruction of the world. The believers, then, became more enthusiastic to gain new members.

Logically if an event is proved to be untrue, individuals should lose interest. But a lot of effort was involved leading up to the "end of the world", and this is hard to deny. Thus it is easier to believe that they were right, and seek others to bolster their endangered beliefs. If lots of people believe the same thing, individuals feel that they cannot be wrong.

Aronson and Mills (1959) call this "effort justification". The more effort it takes to gain something, but that something is not as great as expected the more cognitive dissonance will exist. To resolve this, the individual will increase their liking for what they have gained.

Cognitive dissonance has also been found in two other situations:

1. Post-decision

Following a decision for two equally desirable objects, and the individual is forced to choose one. Cognitive dissonance produces the situation where the individual highlights all good points of their object and all the bad points of the other objects.

2. Counter-attitudinal behaviour

If individuals voluntarily perform a behaviour that is opposite to the attitudes held, this also produces cognitive dissonance.

FANATICISM

Another common explanation for terrorism is that they are fanatics. Fanaticism is assumed to be a set of undesirable characteristics and an over-riding focus on a particular issue or issues that the rest of the population do not have.

But the characteristics of fanaticism are applauded in sportspeople, for example (Eckman 1977). However, with the sportsperson this behaviour would be seen as commitment or dedication because fanaticism is a negative term applied "to the state of mind of those who are wholeheartedly committed to a set of beliefs and are condemned for it" (Milgram 1977).

The main characteristics of the fanatic include a clear, rigid world-view, and an unwillingness to compromise about it. There will be prejudiced attitudes, and a particular understanding of the world.

An example of fanatic behaviour would be self-

immmolation (Crosby et al 1977). This is suicide by
setting fire to oneself, and is not the same as suicide
bombing, which aims to injure others. The behaviour here
is injury to the self only as a form of political
protest. It is quite rare, particularly in the West, and
was used on occasions as part of the peace movement in
the 1960s and 70s in the USA (Taylor 1988). In a way,
this is not really terrorism because it does not injure
others. The same is true for hunger strikes. Thus it is
possible to be a fanatic without being a terrorist.

Prejudiced attitudes

The view of the "enemy" who is to be attacked can be
seen as rooted in prejudice.
For Allport (1954), there are five levels of
prejudice:

1. anti-locution: hostile talk about/towards the
prejudiced group;
2. avoidance: keeping a distance and not mixing with
the prejudiced group;
3. discrimination: unfair treatment of group
members;
4. physical attack;
5. extermination: the ultimate level of prejudice is
to want to remove the prejudiced group from existence.
This has sometimes been called "ethnic cleansing" in
recent years.

Prejudice is not just about holding particular
attitudes which lead to certain behaviours. Prejudice
actually influences an individual's perception of the
world. In a classic experiment, Hastorf and Cantril
(1954) showed that watching the same American Football
match, supporters of each team will attribute less fouls
to their team, and more to the opponents (even though
both teams committed the same number). This process also
involves the stereotyping of the enemy.

Stereotyping influences behaviour in a number of
ways:

i) recall information better that fits the
stereotype;
ii) influences how we behave towards others;
iii) affect the perception of our own group.

Researchers have shown the same news programme about
Middle East issues to pro-Israel and pro-Arab students.
Both groups saw the programme as bias against them. So we
are talking about a distortion in perception that needs

to be addressed while attempting to reduce prejudice (Brewer 2003c).

The basic principles of learning suggest that children observe others expressing prejudiced attitudes or doing prejudiced behaviour, and then copy it (social learning theory). This may explain how specific attitudes or actions are transferred within families, but not more general attitudes or behaviour.

Other factors are also involved, like the media. Pratkanis and Aronson (1991) report how at the start of the Gulf War in the 1990s, Saddam Hussein was unknown to most Americans, and through classical conditioning (associating) his picture with that of Hitler, negative attitudes were formed.

DEHUMANISING "ENEMY"

At the extreme levels of prejudiced behaviour, the key is that the prejudiced group is dehumanised. The psychological erasure of human qualities in others; thus misperceiving them as "sub-human" or "non-human".

Increased aggression against dehumanised groups has been shown in a lab experiment (Bandura 1986). Participants had the opportunity to give electric shocks to male students during a decision-making task. Beforehand, the participants overheard the experimenter talk about the students as intelligent ("the humanising condition"), or as rotten ("the dehumanising condition"). The average number of electric shocks given in the "humanising condition" were 2.5 compared to 6.0 in the "dehumanising condition".

A dehumanised group can easily become the scapegoat for people's troubles and frustrations. For example, the USA is often called the "Great Satan" by some Islamic sects, and thus the mere existence of the enemy becomes the source of all problems rather than the actual political and economic conditions.

GROUP FACTORS IN TERRORISM

FAMILY

Many families are not aware that one of their number is involved in terrorism. Most would want to stop them, but there are cases where the support of the family is a contributing factor. Silke (2003) notes a Hamas (Palestinian group) video from 2002, where the suicide bomber's mother (Naima) appeared alongside her son (Mahmoud al-Obeid) supporting the action.

ROLE OF "RECRUITING INSTITUTIONS"

"Recruiting institutions" are looking for candidates to join or use in terrorist groups. There will be a training process that encourages commitment and loyalty to the cause or better still, the cell (small group). This gives a strong sense of in-group superiority and exclusivity within the group.

Apart from occasions when individuals work alone, suicide terrorism is well organised. Thus a structure of support is needed: recruiters of candidates, scouts for potential targets, guards and drivers of bombers, and bomb-makers (including explosive technicians, electricians, and metalsmiths) (Vallis 2003).

GROUP CONFLICT AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

The realistic group conflict theory attempts to explain inter-group rivalry and competition. This theory by Sherif and Sherif (1969) is based on their work with ingroups and outgroups in three projects in the 1940s and 1950s in the USA. They argue that antagonism arises as a result of the conflict of interests; ie: both groups want the same goal, but cannot have it. This leads to ingroup (own group - "us") favouritism and outgroup discrimination ("them"). For Sherif and Sherif, it is the immediate social situation that produces the conflict.

The Sherifs' research used 11-12 year-old boys at an isolated summer camp. The boys were from similar social backgrounds. On arrival at the camp, the boys were allowed to make friends, then they were divided into two groups (eg: "Red Devils" or "Bulldogs"). The researchers made sure that best friends were separated.

The research manipulated two key variables of group conflict:

i) Strong group identity through group name and

flag;
    ii) direct competition for scarce resources between
the two groups.

    Very clear prejudice and hostility developed between
the two groups (eg: stealing and burning the flag of the
other group). Later in the projects, the researchers
worked to reduce the prejudice.

    Tajfel and Turner (1979) link group conflict to an
individual's self identity. The self concept includes
identification with our social groups and comparison with
other such groups. The social group may be transitory
(eg: group standing at bus stop) or more permanent social
distinctions (eg: gender).

    The basis of the social identity theory is the
tendency to classify people and things into categories,
which leads to an exaggeration of the differences. Tajfel
and Wilkes (1963) asked participants to judge the length
of groups of lines either labelled (eg: A or B) or
unlabelled.
    There was a tendency to judge the labelled lines as
similar (eg: lines within group A) and exaggerate the
differences to other groups, even though this was
inaccurate. Stereotypes can also be involved in this
process.

    At the same time as categorising behaviour,
individuals search for positive self-esteem by assessing
their social groups as "better" than others. It feels
good to belong to the best group, whatever that group may
be. What this means is that ingroup bias can occur
without a strong group identity and direct competition as
Sherif and Sherif believed there needed to be. It is the
mere perception of the existence of another group that
matters. This is known as the minimal group effect.

    The original and main study is Tajfel (1970). Using
64 14-15 year-old Bristol schoolboys, they were randomly
allocated to one of two groups (for example, by
preference for abstract paintings by Klee or Kandinsky;
or tossing a coin). There was no reference to group
identity: the individuals were anonymous, and doing the
experiment in individual cubicles. There was no obvious
self-interest involved.
    The boys were then asked to allocate points as
rewards to different individuals for no particular
reason.
    It was found that the majority of boys gave greater
rewards to individuals in their own groups ie they used
"maximum ingroup profit" and "maximum difference"
strategies.

Though this study is an artificial experiment, Reicher (1984) found that social identity was important in explaining behaviour in the rioting in the St.Paul's area of Bristol in 1980.

This approach tends to see conflict as an inevitable part of social life. Individuals will form social identities, and thus be prejudiced against the outgroup to increase their own self-esteem.

However, Wetherell (1982) has found that cultural norms are an important variable. She produced a replication of Tajfel (1970) in New Zealand with white and Polynesian children. The latter children were more generous with their rewards to the outgroup (ie: "maximum joint profit" strategy). This is because generosity to others is a strong Polynesian cultural norm.

SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Conformity to group pressure

It is possible to change an individual's behaviour through the pressure of others. This does not have to involve to force or coercion. The individual may change their behaviour because they come to believe in the cause (internalisation of group norms; Kelman 1958) or simply to outwardly conform while privately disagreeing.

Individuals sometimes conform to the majority when they personally disagree. This is normative conformity. Here individuals are outwardly conforming because they want to be rewarded for doing so or do not want to be rejected by the group for not conforming. This is "situational conformity" only (Moxon et al 2003).

The best known research on conformity was carried out by Asch (1951). Using simple perceptual tasks, Asch was interested to see if individuals would publicly conform to the obvious wrong answer when they knew the correct answer.

The participants were tested in a small group of around six people. In each case, there was only one participant, the other members of the group were confederates of the experimenter told to give the wrong answer at certain times. The participants did not know this. There was pressure to conform to the majority giving the wrong answer.

Overall, an average conformity rate of 32% was found. Further research by Asch and others have shown which factors influence conformity to the majority (tables 4 and 5).

FACTOR	MOST CONFORMITY	LEAST CONFORMITY
size of group	7:1	1:1
status of group members	high	low
difficulty of task	lines very similar	lines not similar
"deviant" in group	"deviant" changes mind and then conforms	"deviant" does not conform
public or private conformity	public face-to-face	private; eg: writing down answer

Table 4 - Factors found by Asch that influence conformity.

SITUATIONAL FACTORS

- uncertainty of group task increases conformity

- individual and the group: greater conformity to the majority if the individual expects future interactions with the group; or is strongly attached to the group (commitment); and/or do not feel completely accepted by the group (ie: insecurity about position in the group).

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOURCE OF THE INFLUENCE

- group appears knowledgeable

- group's attractiveness to individual: greater attractiveness means greater conformity

Table 5 - Factors affecting conformity.

Conformity to role (identification)

In some situations, individuals conform to the social expectations of the particular roles they are playing. This is known as conformity to role or identification. This involves a much wider amount of conformity. In other words, conformity on all of the individual's behaviour (Moxon et al 2003).
Conformity to role is best seen in the Stanford Prison Simulation (Haney et al 1973).

Twenty-two male volunteers were chosen to take part in a prison simulation. They agreed to play the role of "prisoner" or "prison guard" (chosen at random) for 14 days in a mock jail built. The volunteers were given few instructions on how to behave or what was expected. Those volunteers chosen were judged to be most stable, mature,

and least involved in anti-social behaviour. This is important - the volunteers were "normal" men, and did not have psychological problems.

The "prisoners" became passive and showed negative emotions. The "guards" were active in the interactions with the prisoners, and, though no physical aggression was permitted, but there was verbal aggression. The "prisoners" were belittled and humiliated by "psychological games", like making the prisoners clean the toilets with their bare hands.

The simulation was terminated unexpectedly after six days. Haney et al (1973) note: "The extreme pathological reactions which emerged in both groups of subjects testify to the power of the social forces operating" (p60).

This research is important because it shows the power of the situation and role expectations upon behaviour.

Obedience to authority

This is compliance to the demands of an authority figure. There is less opportunity to resist as with requests from ordinary people. It is the abdication of personal responsibility due to social power and status of the authority figure in the social hierarchy (Moxon et al 2003).

The classic work was by Stanley Milgram, who set up an experiment that would involve obedience to an authority figure to apparently harm (or even kill) a complete stranger.

Forty male volunteers aged between 20 and 50 years were chosen for the first experiment (Milgram 1963). The participants were not aware that the experiment was a "set-up", for them everything appeared to be real.

The participant was shown a machine with gradings of electrical shocks of 15 volts from 0 to 450 volts. They were told that if the "learner" in the next room failed on a series of memory tests, the "learner" should be given increasing electric shocks as punishment.

The participant believed that the machine is real because they were given a mild electric shock as part of the testing of the machine. So Milgram had set up the situation thus: would an ordinary man give increasing punishment to a stranger in the next room because an experimenter in a white coat told them to do so? The maximum voltage of 450 would easily kill a person.

Psychiatrists predicted before the experiment that 0.1% of people would obey until 450 volts (ie: 1 in 1000

people).

In the first experiment, of the 40 men, 26 obeyed to 450 volts. Nobody stopped before 300 volts, which is still probably enough to kill someone. Thus the level of obedience (ie: to 450 volts) was 65%.

Milgram's original findings were a surprise to him, so he set about trying to discover the exact variables involved in obedience. Over the following ten years from the original experiment, he ran another twenty different experiments.

The reason why individuals obey in such situations, and do things that they would not usually do, like harm to a complete stranger without provocation is due to a number of factors in the situation.

Firstly, obedience occurred in small steps rather than one off. Gibson and Haritos-Fatouros (1986) study of Greek soldiers who were convicted of torture shows that they began slowly. For example, being asked to hold the victim down, later to kick them and so on. This easy graduation went with dehumanization of the victim, and social support of society and the government for their behaviour.

Another key factor in obedience is the presence of the experimenter in a white coat (uniform) which signalled that he was "legitimate authority".

Individuals are socialised into obeying "legitimate authority", whatever is asked. This produced the demands of the situation and social roles established by the authority figure. Much of social behaviour is based upon fulfilling social roles with "social contracts". Disobedience would disrupt this process.

Finally, the authority figure takes responsibility for the outcome.

An American soldier, William Calley, was tried for a massacre at Mi Lai in Vietnam. His defence was based around simply following orders (quoted in Kelman and Hamilton 1989).

The work of Milgram is so important because it "challenges the myth that evil lurks in the minds of evil people - the bad they who are different dispositionally from the good us who would never do such things" (Zimbardo 1992 p592).

SOCIAL FACTORS IN TERRORISM

POVERTY AND LACK OF EDUCATION

"Common sense would dictate that there is a direct correlation between poverty and terrorism; yet the evidence gathered thus far does not lend credence to this proposition, and if anything, supports the opposite" (von Hippel 2002 p26).

For suicide terrorists like September 2001 in the USA, they were neither poor nor uneducated. "If poverty really were the root cause of terrorism, more terrorists would come from the poorest part of the world, sub-Saharan Africa; and this, so far, is not the case" (von Hippel 2002 p26).

Furthermore, Wilkinson (1977), talking about groups like the Baader-Meinhof gang in West Germany in the 1970s, noted that "much of the politically motivated terror in liberal democracies for the past decade has been committed by the spoilt children of affluence" (p93).

SOCIAL SUPPORT AND STATUS

Behaviour that is supported by a society and given high status becomes important in that society. For example, in Palestine after a suicide bombing, posters of the bomber are put up in the street to honour them. The family of the bomber are congratulated and looked upon with high status in society. The newspapers announce the death in a positive way as a marriage to "72 black-eyed virgins". At school, poems are written and read to celebrate such events (Ormsby 2003).

Stern (2000) found similar elevation of status of families of Pakistani suicide bombers in Kashmir, and the families also received financial help to start businesses or build new homes. These can be called the "mechanisms of social approval" (Centre for the Study of Terrorism 2002 quoted in Vallis 2003).

"Al Manar TV" in Lebanon shows the videos of suicide bombers in Israel to produce a "culture of martyrdom". This is crucial in overcoming the prohibition on suicide generally in Islam with that of "heroic martyrdom" ("Human Weapons" 2002).

Practical help in the form of money has been found in Pakistan (Kashmir), Eritrea (against Ethiopia), and for Kosovar Albanians (von Hippel 2002). The Iraqi Government of Saddam Hussein was said to pay families of Palestinian suicide bombers 25 000 dollars in March 2002 (Keller 2002).

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF "NORMAL" BEHAVIOUR

What is acceptable or "normal" is constructed by social events and forces. Where violence or terrorism are everyday aspects of life, this can produce a new form of "normality". For example, a suicide bombing when rare is a strong political weapon, but if it becomes too common, it can be an end itself. It becomes a normal occurrence and part of everyday life.

The eroding of boundaries between military and civil is evident in World War II with the British bombing of German cities. Thus the unlimited boundaries of what can be done to defend the cause. Robert Lifton calls this "apocalyptic violence" ("Human Weapons" 2002). The fact that this example is during an "official" war is no different to terrorists who believe that they are involved in a war. The justification of behaviour links to its "normality" and acceptability.

IDEOLOGY

A common belief is that strong ideology, often religious, has "brainwashed" the individuals into the terrorist behaviour. Certainly there is evidence of this in some situation - both explicit "brainwashing", and the implicit pressure of group members.

Berthillier and Vaillot (1998) produced a film which studied religious cults that committed terrorism and/or suicide. One group is "Aum" in Japan, four members of which released toxic nerve gas on the Japanese underground in 1995. A number of key factors emerge from this group:

a) An ideology that emphasised the constant threat (actual or created) from outside, usually the Government, which encouraged cohesiveness within the group;

b) Thus the need for preparation for "war";

c) Apocalyptic prophecies that encourage a state of fear;

d) The denial of death as the end, but seen as a means of being reborn;

e) Overt "brainwashing"; eg: followers locked in cells for days with only a non-stop video of the leader;

f) Punishment for disobedience; eg: "bad" followers put into boiling water.

However, it is important to note that among

Palestinian suicide bombers, they are not necessarily uneducated individuals who have been "brainwashed". Surveys of Palestinian society shows that middle-class and higher educated individuals showed the greatest support for "suicide tactics". In December 2001, a survey of 1375 West Bank and Gaza Palestinians of 18 years or older compared the views of educated and uneducated. Those of good education (12 years or more of schooling) showed 50% more support for armed attacks on Israel compared to poorly educated individuals (illiterate). Increasing education was negatively correlated with supporting dialogue with Israel (Krueger and Maleckova 2003).

But wealthy Pakistanis, supportive of attacks in Kashmir, preferred to "donate their money than their sons to the cause" (Stern 2000).

A common misinterpretation is that religious ideology, particularly Islamic, is key to the participation in suicide terrorism. However, the LTTE in Sri Lanka "pioneered" the method of suicide bombing, and they did not have religious motivation (Gunaratna 2000).

But, for those who are religious, martyrdom is exchanged for a place in Paradise directly in some Islamic cults.

DISCOURSES

Acts of behaviour have to be justified to the self and to others. In a sense, discourses are the shared beliefs of the individuals and their community or society: "some discourses or constructions of the world are so familiar that they appear as 'common sense'" (Marshall 2002).

Language is seen as a social process itself, rather than just a means of communication. For example, the words chosen are not neutral but tell us something about the social world.

Wetherell and Maybin (1996) give three features of language use which challenge the assumption that language is neutral:

i) Language has an "action orientation" - utterances state information, and perform an action. In an argument, individuals are not just stating opposite facts, but are using language to justify their position and undermine the other's. We are doing something with our utterances.

ii) Language is part of the social world - rather than language simply telling us about the social world; it is a "constitutive part of those actions, events and

situations" (Wetherell and Maybin 1996 p244).

iii) Indexical property of discourse - all language is defined by the context of its use.

The whole emphasis is away from language as referring to objects "out there" to the idea that language is about building the social reality. The same event can be described in a number of different ways. It is always possible to see how the choice of words can influence the whole understanding of an event. For example, during a news report, the use of words like "murdered", "killed", "slaughtered" - all set the context for understanding the perpetuators as good or bad. Potter and Wetherell (1987) use the example of "terrorist" or "freedom fighter". Taken a step further, with our language we are also defining ourselves.

Use of Discourses to Defend Extreme Behaviour

In the BBC programme "Loyalists: War and Peace" (1999), a former Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) member, Bobby Morton, justifies the murder of six Catholics as retaliation for the killing of the UVF leader in June 1994.

Peter Taylor (interviewer)(PT): That was cold-blooded murder, what else is it?

Bobby Morton (BM): I call it retaliation which is not quite the same thing.

PT: But you end up with dead Catholics who are innocent.

BM: In retaliation for dead Protestants who are laying on the Shankhill Road. Yes, I can do it.

PT: But that doesn't justify the death of innocent Catholics, does it?

BM: If you are sending out a message to the IRA that if you kill a Protestant someone is going to pay for this here, now it may be crude; it's vicious, but the end may well justify the means.

Thus the perpetrator of the killing is able to explain the murders as justifiable, and even necessary within the shared world-view of his supporters.

Another example where individuals justify their behaviour by referring to the discourses in society for support is prejudice. One of the most common discourses used is "national identity" or "nationalism".

Cashmore (1987) interviewed a number of individuals in the West Midlands, and showed how prejudiced attitudes are embedded within the logic of defending "English culture". Cashmore quotes the example of a white company director who justifies his anti-immigration views through such discourses and ideas. The individual's prejudiced comments are embedded in arguments that link to the shared meanings that are obvious to the listeners.

The director says, for example, "there's a lot who come in just to draw the dole". Here he has linked to a number of shared meanings:

a) England cannot afford to pay everybody benefits;
b) I work hard for my money and do not want to subsidise "lazy" people;
c) "they" are trying to take advantage of our welfare system;
d) "they" are trying to take what is mine;
e) such behaviour is not right.

Thus his prejudiced attitudes appear entirely rational by this logic. He says in other words, I am just doing what everybody does and protecting myself, my family and my country (Brewer 2003c).

In the case of suicide bombing in Israel, the perpetrators are defining it as an act of national self-defence for Palestine or a way of shaping the future for their children (Vallis 2003). These discourses are quite "normal" and acceptable to most people, but it is the action that follows from this that is not acceptable.

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